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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 001617

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SUBJECT: FIRST FRANCO-POLISH SUMMIT, FEB. 28, ARRAS, FRANCE

REF: WARSAW 1204

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: President Chirac hosted Polish President Kwasniewski and several ministers for the debut Franco-Polish summit in Arras (northern France) on Feb. 28. French media emphasized that Paris and Warsaw "sealed their reconciliation" (Le Figaro, Mar. 1) at the summit. Both the MFA desk for Poland and the Polish Embassy here noted the positive tone of the meetings, the breadth of issues discussed in the joint communique (available in French at www.elysee.fr) and the recognition that any modification to the French ban of Polish workers from the labor market will have to wait until after France's May 29 referendum on the draft European constitutional treaty. END SUMMARY

2. (U) During Kwasniewski's October 2004 visit to France, President Chirac proposed commencing annual summits, such as France currently holds with the UK, Spain, Italy and Germany (the Franco-German summits being twice yearly). The French chose to host the summit in the Pas-de-Calais because the region is home to some 500,000 French citizens of Polish origin. The summit capped an acceleration of high-level bilateral exchanges, following not only Kwasniewski's October trip to France, but the November bilateral governmental seminar held in Paris, Foreign Minister Barnier's January trip to Poland, and Chirac's January 27 attendance at the ceremonies commemorating the liberation of Auschwitz.

3. (U) Demonstrating the scope of issues to be considered at the summit, seven ministers accompanied each president. The list of ministerial participants included:

French side
Interior Minister Villepin
Foreign Minister Barnier
Transport Minister Robien
Agriculture/Rural Minister Bussereau
Minister Delegate of Agriculture/Rural Ministry Patrick Devedjian
Labor Minister in the Employment, Labor and Social Affairs Ministry Gerard Larcher
Minister for European Affairs in the MFA Claudie Haignere

Polish side
Vice Minister and Economy/Labor Minister Hausner
Foreign Minister Rotfeld
MSWIA Minister Kalisz
Finance Minister Gronicki
Agriculture Minister Olejniczak
Equipment Minister Krzysztof Opawski
UKIE State Secretary Pietras

4. (C) At the end of the day, Presidents Chirac and Kwasniewski issued both a Communique underlining French and Polish support for UNSCR 1559 and for the UN investigation into the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri and a declaration detailing the subjects of discussion. In addition, they held a joint press conference at the end of the afternoon. Prior to the summit, President Chirac granted an interview to Gazeta Wyborcza, which appeared the day of the summit.

5. (C) The Polish Embassy here characterized the ambiance of the meeting as extremely good; they noted that the two presidents were able to speak frankly. The summit declaration detailed the subjects discussed: Within the European context they were CFSP, the European Neighborhood Policy (especially as pertains to Ukraine), Russia, the Lisbon strategy, the draft constitution, the budget framework for 2007 to 2013, and the reforms to the Stability Pact. Global affairs discussed included Iraq and the MEPP, UN reform, and the role of the Council of Europe. In regard to bilateral relations, the two teams discussed agriculture, Poland's eventual accession to the Schengen group, military cooperation, Lot's future airliner purchase, and the possibility of France opening up its labor market to Polish workers.

6. (C) The working group created at the November governmental seminar to consider how France could liberalize its labor market to accept Poles presented its initial draft to the presidents (observers will recall that France adopted

the initial derogation of two years provided for during the accession negotiations; at the expiration of those two years -- i.e. in May 2006 -- France can extend the ban for another three years, drop the ban, or make some other agreement with individual new member countries). According to the proposal, the French would not open the entire labor market to Polish workers all at one time, but instead would open up specific labor sectors in specific geographical locations (calling for nurses in Auvergne, for example, or construction workers in Brittany). The Embassy here described the reaction of the French to the proposal as "good enough," but said the French made it clear that with the runup to the May referendum on the draft European constitution, it is not yet a propitious time to consider lifting the derogations. Our MFA interlocutor confirmed that there would be no movement before the French referendum and added that the French would seek to implement at least some element(s) of the proposal by May 1, 2006 (the end of the first two-year derogation), but added, "That could mean April 30."

17. (C) The Polish Embassy characterized President Chirac as "very positive" on trans-atlantic relations, noting that Chirac told Kwasniewski that he sees a "new movement" on the part of the US, and that Europe must take advantage of it. He told Kwasniewski that after his recent meetings with the Secretary and the President, he is convinced that President

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Bush believes it needs a "solid" Europe as a strong partner to work with. In public remarks during the joint press conference, Kwasniewski said that good relations between Washington and/or Paris and Berlin are a "guarantee of security for ourselves," and noted that the Poles welcome the return to an active transatlantic dialogue with satisfaction.

18. (C) During the discussion of Lot's planned acquisition of airliners, Chirac "insisted" that Poland buy Airbus, according to the Polish embassy. In response to a query during the press conference, Kwasniewski said that Chirac had evoked the Airbus question in its European dimension, "that is to say that it's a big European project that should engage all European countries, whether it's involving production or using the planes."

19. (C) According to the Polish Embassy, the two leaders discussed Ukraine mainly in the context of Russia. Chirac told Kwasniewski that it is necessary to pay attention to how the West treats Russia and Putin, that the situation in Russia is fragile and one must not take careless shots that could damage progress, that steps are being made little by little. Kwasniewski pressed back, emphasizing that Poland can understand fragility, and that the West must remember the fragility with which the countries of the former USSR and Warsaw Pact emerged from decades of Soviet domination. We can't change that history, he told Chirac. Kwasniewski also emphasized that European policy toward Russia must be a Union-wide, consensual policy, and not just one of Germany and France.

110. (C) Regarding Schroeder's Munich remarks, Chirac said he was completely in accord with them. Kwasniewski said that whatever the outcome, NATO must remain the core element of trans-atlantic engagement and European defense.

111. (C) Additionally, Kwasniewski petitioned Chirac to include Poland in the five-country informal working group of countries discussing immigration, currently comprising France, Italy, the UK, Spain and Germany. Chirac promised to consider the request but was non-committal, according to the Embassy.

112. (C) Our Polish contact here was careful last fall not to oversell to us the import of Kwasniewski's October 2004 visit. She noted that it had gone well, but it had probably been more valuable for the strengthening of working-level contacts as the two sides planned for that meeting, and as a ground-breaker, rather than for any real breakthrough. In contrast, she was very pleased with the outcome of the summit, making it clear that the Polish Embassy in Paris sees the rapprochement between the two states as growing more and more solid. In the press conference, Chirac mentioned French divergences with Poland over Iraq, noting, "That's the past." The French press sold the story as well, with headlines noting the "sealing" of Franco-Polish reconciliation. The MFA desk officer, however, remained a bit skeptical, describing the glowing descriptions of the event as a bit "irrational." He noted President Chirac's interest in strengthening relations with all/all of the five other EU "grands:" Germany, the UK and Italy, but also Spain and Poland. The French realize, as Chirac noted in his Gazeta interview, that the French, Germans and Poles together make up 40 percent of the EU population, and, as the desk officer characterized it, "coalitions of the willing" are the way of the EU-25, where groups will coalesce in specific issue areas where they share interests (Chirac specifically pointed to agriculture as one area during his remarks).

13. (C) The biannual Weimar Triangle meeting of the two presidents and German Chancellor Schroeder is planned for May 19 in Nancy, although the MFA pointed out the difficulties that meeting that date may pose, given the May 9 commemorations of the end of World War II in Moscow, the May 15 Vienna ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of Austria regaining its full sovereignty, the May 16-17 Council of Europe Ministerial in Warsaw, the May 29 French referendum, and the possibility of Polish legislative elections in early June (reftel). He noted that the charged calendar would make it very difficult for the foreign ministers to find time to meet to prepare the Weimar Triangle summit. The next Franco-Polish summit will occur in Spring 2006 in Poland.
Leach